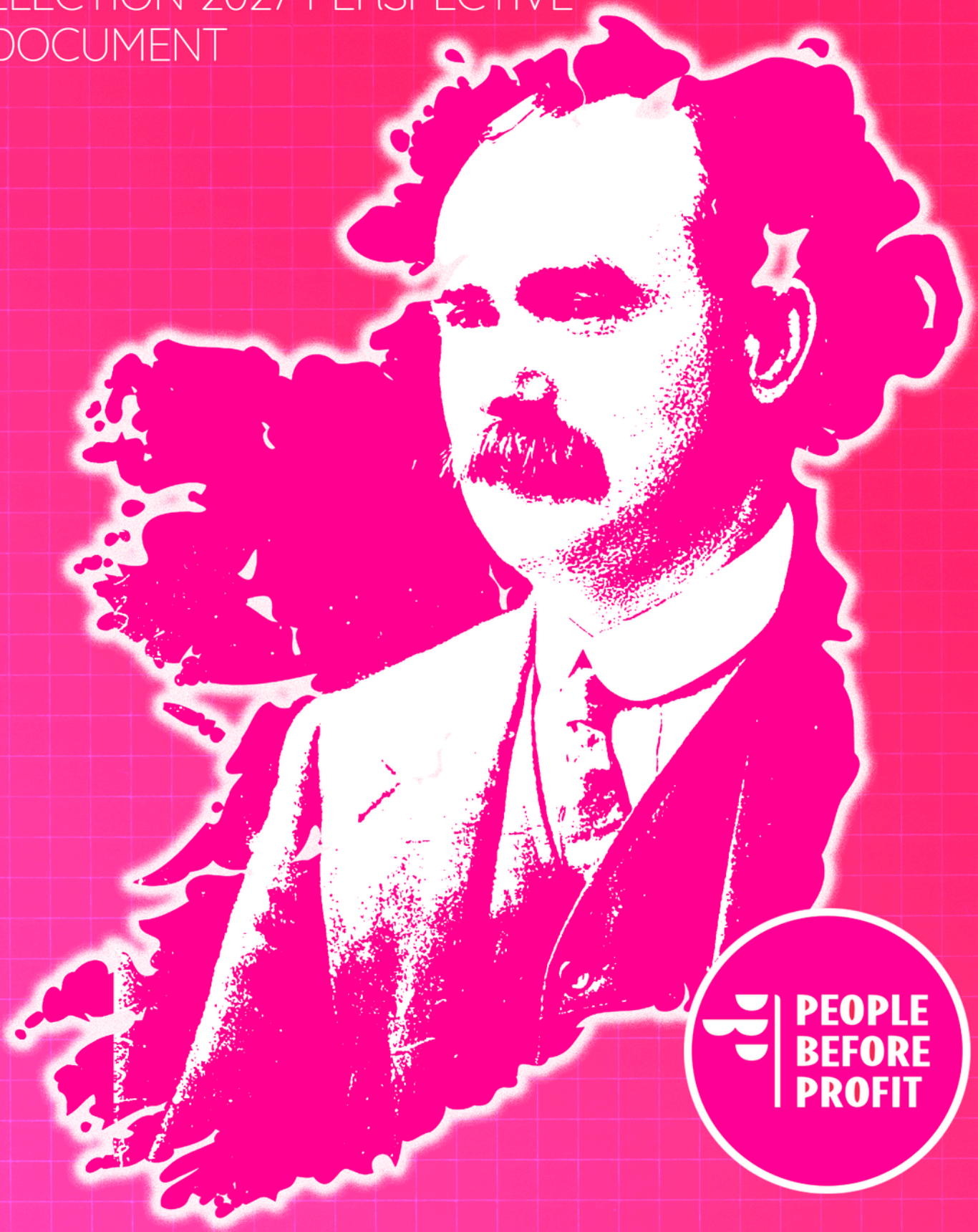
TOWARDS A SOCIALIST UNITED IRELAND

ELECTION 2027 PERSPECTIVE DOCUMENT



PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT

ENDING DUP OBSTRUCTIONISM | **TRANSFORMING DEMOCRACY**

On September 25th, the Parades Commission approved an Orange Order parade on Garvaghy Road for the first time in 28 years. It triggered an immense crisis, **but a massive people-power mobilisation stopped the unwanted march.**

That crisis, however, has shone a light on how bizarre politics are here. **Division between working-class people** is being **used to cover** a **lack of progress** on the issues that affect them.

We cannot go on like this – **we need a radical alternative.** The big parties are locked in a stalemate. **We need to offer a political choice which promotes greater equality,** an **end to sectarianism,** opposition to war, **solidarity with Palestine** and a **defence of women's and LGBTQ rights.**

We need **radical** thinking.

INSTITUTIONAL SECTARIANISM

What is at the root of the problem? For decades, we have been told that **we *must* belong to one of two cultures.** You can be either Orange or Green, and you should **stick to your tradition.**

Politics here assumes that all Protestants support the union with Britain while all Catholics don't. **These two cultures are presented as irreconcilable** competing **political blocks**. Nobody would deny that you are born into certain communities or pick up ideas from family and friends. But **the two cultures approach ignores some basic things:**

- **Working-class people have more in common than divides us.** Take, for example, **wages.** Our median wages are about **£2,000 lower than those in the rest of the UK** and **Southern Ireland.** No wonder that large numbers of working people – about one in eight - are facing or at risk of poverty.

- Increasingly **many people do not identify with either tradition.** The figures are hard to come by, and people have different reasons for not identifying. But many younger people in particular do not identify with Orange or Green. People Before Profit refuses to say it just represents **'one community'.**

- **The wealthiest people are using ‘culture wars’ to keep us divided.** Global corporations are run by people whose luxurious lives could not be dreamed of even by a Roman emperor. Yet they are insecure, and they try to keep us divided. They use social media algorithms to stoke up support for a type of politics represented by Donald Trump.

- **Unionism has lost both its majority and its material base is diminished. When the DUP and TUV tried to rally their base over Drumcree,** the vast majority of people stayed at home, and thousands from a Protestant background signed a letter backing the Garvaghy Road residents. **Unionism's decline has opened people up to new ideas** and **a new kind of politics.**



It is tempting to 'balance' your criticisms of the main parties. The BBC often says it is doing this. **Every criticism of the DUP is supposed to be 'balanced' by one from Sinn Féin.** This way, **the moderate voice** appears **to rise above the fray** to offer a more sensible way forward.

This is **the method** that **the Alliance Party has perfected.** So, for example, **they criticise the Orange Order for trying to march down Garvaghy Road,** but then **they condemn those who 'break the law' to oppose it.**

But **‘balance’** often **gets it wrong. Did women win the vote without ‘breaking the law’?** Or **would the Civil Rights Movement** in the USA – or, indeed, in the North - **have gotten anywhere if some people did not ‘break the law’?** Unjust laws have always been broken.

That is why we say **the Democratic Unionist Party are a particular problem** that needs special attention.

For decades, they pretended to represent the Protestant community, but they are a right-wing party that covered their policies with sectarianism. Today it has gotten worse.
They are taking a leaf out of Trump’s book and leaning into the ‘culture wars’ to halt their decline.

They are hypocrites who talk about the Bible and morality, yet **many of their representatives have been convicted of abusing women and children.**

No doubt, the DUP will push for **even more sectarian polarisation** before the May elections.

To see how far right the DUP has travelled, just look at the following.

- The **DUP Education Minister Paul Givan appeared** live on Sky News **amongst masked men in Lisburn when pogroms against migrants were taking place.** Gavin Robinson, their current leader, joined a protest in Ballybeen where roads were blocked in an anti-immigrant protest.

- **The DUP has always been an anti-gay party,** having played a central role in Save Ulster from Sodomy. Now, their MLAs **refuse to support a ban on barbaric 'conversion therapy'** because this would threaten freedom of speech and religious expression. They attack and scapegoat trans people, denying gender-affirming and lifesaving care to young trans people

- DUP representatives once **told members of the Women's Coalition to ' get back to the kitchen sink' and to 'breed more for Ulster'.** Today they **oppose** the **right of women to** avail of **abortion**

- The DUP want to change the curriculum in schools **to promote a 'Christian ethos' and 'collective religious worship'.** This is the rhetoric used by right-wingers all over the world to use religion to scapegoat people.

- The DUP **oppose legislation that will give workers more rights.** They **blocked the Good Jobs Bill,** which would protect tips for workers, strengthen neonatal leave and pay, improve paternity entitlements and redundancy protection for pregnant employees.

The foundation stone of the DUP has always been **to keep Catholics in a second-class status.** But now they think the best way to do this is to model themselves on Reform or Donald Trump.

SOME QUESTIONS ARISE FROM THIS

Why must such a **right-wing party always be in government as mandated by law?**

Why must a DUP leader **always assume the title of First** or **Deputy First Minister?**

Why is it written into legislation that, as the leading Unionist party – **even if they are a minority** within the North- **they can dictate?**

Why must **a budget be framed with such a right-wing party** when many public sector workers depend on government funding?

What gives the DUP a right to **undemocratically block all sorts of progressive measures?**

Many of the answers to these questions are to be found in the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which gave legislative effect to the Good Friday Agreement. This is an international agreement between the main parties, the Irish and British governments and is lodged at the United Nations.

Many people thought there were progressive aspects to this act.

- It repealed sections of the Government of Ireland Act of 1922, which partitioned the island of Ireland.
- It ended majority Unionist rule, which had been used to maintain a position of supremacy.
- It included certain human rights provisions.

But **the Act was also double-edged and contained many weaknesses which haunt us to this day.** While many saw it as an advance, **it has also institutionalised rather than removed sectarianism.**

There are two main problems.


BORDER
POLL

First, the act **affirms partition** until a majority in the North of Ireland agrees to ending it. That is **NOT** a **majority of people on the whole island** – just those within the North. But, even within this limited framework, there is a major difficulty. **How is one to ascertain which view has a majority?** How frequently must you ask the partition question?

The Northern Ireland Act **gives the power to hold a referendum** to the **British Secretary of State.** They are only obliged to call a referendum when it 'appears likely' that people will vote to end partition. Nowhere is it specified how this Secretary of State will judge if it 'appears likely.'

In the thirty years since the ceasefire, the Secretary of State has refused to call a border poll. Not even once.
The reason is that the **British and Irish governments do not want such a poll** – the promise of being able to end partition by democratic means has been stymied.

The British government, **whether** led by **the Labour Party** or **the Conservatives,** wants to maintain the image of Britain as a major imperial player on the world stage. **They dread any talk of the breakup of the UK** and think that a poll in Ireland might be a precedent for the Scots and even the Welsh. The Southern government, including both **Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael,** are perfectly comfortable holding on to government power for over one hundred years. They **do not want the political transformation that could result from the end of partition** upsetting their rule.



Second, the Northern Ireland Act **locks us into institutionalised sectarianism.** It stipulates that there **must be a grand coalition between parties of 'both sides'.**

If an MLA **does not identify with either** Orange or Green, they are called **'other'**. They can **never aspire to the position of First or Deputy First Minister** because this must come from either a Nationalist or Unionist party. The act even implies that there must be a balance on 'resource allocation' between the two communities. It **gives a veto to any party that can gather 30 out of 90 MLAs for a 'petition of concern'.**

No matter how far right their politics, a party like the DUP gets a privileged place in government.

The distribution of ‘community’ resources then allows the dominant parties of both sides to divide out limited funding to groups and projects of their choosing.

Sectarianism is so ingrained in our institutions that even **when People Before Profit want to organise a meeting,** say for trade unionists, in Stormont, **we have to get cross-community sponsorship** from two of the communal parties.

The DUP regularly uses the provision of a ‘petition of concern’ and other sectarian levers to **block progressive measures.**

- They used it to stop a provision for **marriage equality** for gay people
- They stopped the **raising** of the **minimum age of criminal responsibility** from ten years – among the lowest in Europe – to 12, 14 or 16.
- They **ended ‘holiday hunger’ payments** - direct financial support during the school holidays, given to families whose children are entitled to free school meals during term-time. In recent months, they unsuccessfully attempted to block legislation to re-introduce these payments.
- And **when a majority of MLAs voted to sack** Education Minister **Paul Givan** following his whitewashing junket to Israel during their genocide, **he was saved due** to their not being **‘cross-community’ consent.**

In Stormont, **a democratic majority is insufficient if it does not also have a majority in both communal blocks.**

Of course, the main parties often do manage to agree. MLAs in Sinn Féin, SDLP, Alliance, DUP and UUP ***came together to*** *establish an* ***'independent' remuneration board*** *that swiftly* ***recommended a completely unjustified 27% pay increase for MLAs*** *– when Stormont can't give health and social care workers the measly 3.3% they're due.*

The five main parties **voted against** legislative amendments from **Gerry Carroll MLA** that would have seen **any MLA pay increase limited to Consumer Price Index inflation,** and trade union representation on the Independent Remuneration Board.

And when it comes to the budget, both the DUP and Sinn Féin are able to play a game. **The DUP opposes** any **universal free public services,** while **Sinn Féin says we would love to do it, but don't have the money.**

Blame Westminster, not us.



THE LONG-MARCH UNRAVELLING

For almost thirty years, Sinn Féin's strategy has been **a long march through the institutions;** a transition away from armed struggle and towards an institutional and electoral route to its goals. That has **necessitated** an **ideological drive towards respectability, moderation** and **accommodation with capital.** It's fair to say that over the past three decades, the ***state has changed Sinn Féin far more than Sinn Féin has changed the state.***

Despite holding **five ministries** in the Executive, **Sinn Féin has struggled to deliver anything of substance**. Casement Park has lain derelict for well over a decade. The A5 is still unfinished. The Irish language strategy was promised but never delivered. The installation of dual-language signage at Grand Central, the largest integrated transport hub in Ireland, has been obstructed by the DUP in court.

Michelle O'Neill was in the First Minister's office, with Sinn Féin governing as the largest party in the North. Despite that, a court ruling and a Parades Commission decision inexplicably gave the green light to put an Orange march back on the Garvaghy Road, and the Executive could not stop it. **People power stopped it: the residents, and those who stood with them.** Sinn Féin's leaders ended up on the road with everyone else who opposes the reactionary, triumphalist politics of the Orange Order. **They were right to be there, but it showed the limits of their approach.** It also suited them. **After years of passing on austerity, the party found a chance to look radical again,** with an Assembly election in May and government in Dublin in its sights. Unionism and Sinn Féin both used Garvaghy to pose as defenders of their communities.

The task for People Before Profit now is to expose the contradictions Garvaghy laid bare - about our institutions, our peace process and the establishment parties.

THE 'TWO TRADITIONS' MODEL

Since 1998, people have been told that peace entails compromise between two traditions, with each side taking its share of an ever-shrinking pot. **That model has failed completely because it does not resist or smash sectarianism.** It simply **manages sectarianism** and rewards those who stoke division.

Loyalism and **Orangeism play a unique role in this,** as the main source of division within the working class. Both rest on the idea that Protestant workers have a stake in a state that kept their Catholic neighbours down. But the shipyards, engineering works and mills that gave that idea substance are gone. **Working-class Protestants are on the same housing waiting lists, receiving treatment on the same hospital corridors and struggling by on the same low wages** as everyone else

.

As stated above, **it's increasingly clear that unionism has lost both its majority and its material base is diminished.** The inability of the DUP and TUV to mobilise in Portadown demonstrated that clearly. Thousands of people from a Protestant background signed a letter backing the Garvaghy Road residents. Unionism's decline has opened people up to new ideas and a new kind of politics.

A GOVERNMENT WITHOUT THE DUP

People Before Profit wants to see a government without the DUP in it. Sinn Féin and Alliance must stop propping them up. Our demand is simple: don't form a government with the DUP.

There is a progressive majority in society for rent controls, workers' rights, properly funded public services and an end to culture wars. The DUP is the main obstacle to it. Getting past that obstacle means ending the sectarian veto and mandatory coalition. Then an Executive could be built around a programme for real material change, which is what most people actually want. **By removing these undemocratic blocks it becomes possible for a majority to seek to address the immediate challenges** facing working class communities.

The May Assembly election ought to be a major concern for the whole of the Irish left. **Gerry Carroll MLA is the only socialist in Stormont; the only voice in the chamber arguing for a real alternative to austerity, landlordism and handouts to multinationals.** Losing that seat would leave Stormont entirely to parties that manage and indeed bolster a system that oppresses working-class people of all creeds.
The stakes could not be higher.

WORKING CLASS PEOPLE SUFFER

Working people have **always had to struggle to get a better life**. But in the North, the political setup militates against their efforts. Grievances are channelled into an Orange-Green framework, and **the main parties do very little for working people.** Here are some examples



People Before Profit have tried to promote basic rights for tenants, but we are repeatedly blocked. **There are no rent controls to stop landlords hiking up rents** by however much they want.

There is **no ban on 'no-fault' evictions.** If you are not wrecking an apartment, you should not be evicted at the whim of a landlord. **There is not even a Residential Tenancies Board** where you can raise disputes or appeal against a landlord.

Free School meals: Over **100,000 children are going without necessities** because their parents cannot afford them. Yet **most of them do not even get a free school meal** because their parents earn more than £15,900.



The cost of a school meal is now £3.40, so imagine what you would pay if you had three or four children.



Childcare: Three and four-year-olds were **only entitled to 12.5 hours per week of free pre-school education.** This has recently been expanded to a maximum 22.5 hours per week.

In England, Scotland and Wales, parents are entitled to up to **30 hours of childcare per week.** The Education Minister recently announced that he was **removing the Socially Disadvantaged Circumstances criterion, meaning that most children with a parent on benefits will not be eligible for priority nursery places.**

Up to 11,000 women are unable to work due to childcare commitments and a lack of free childcare.

While employment law is devolved here, **paternity leave and unpaid parental leave became day-one rights in Britain** in April 2026, **but not in the North.** Finally, childcare workers are poorly paid, and they are also not aligned with their colleagues in Britain when it comes to ratios of children to carers.

Rates: This is the main way the Northern Assembly raises revenue to pay for education and health. But it is profoundly unequal. **There is no link between rates and a household's ability to pay.**

Rates are calculated based on the capital value of a home, and the maximum cap is currently set at £400,000. **A family living in a £5 million mansion is issued the same rates bill as a pensioner living in a home worth £400,000.**

Big companies like Amazon pay only a tiny fraction of their profits in rates. There is no special tax on second homes. Huge, multinational companies like Caterpillar and Coca-Cola are handed more than £70 million of public money each year through rates breaks, through an antiquated policy known as industrial derating.

Healthcare: People living in the North of Ireland **suffer the worst healthcare outcomes and access to services across Britain and Ireland.** Around 1 in 3 people in the North is on a health waiting list, double the rate of other services.



54% of those on waiting lists are for longer than one year,

ten times higher than England and triple other regional equivalents. **Less than 1 in 3 cancer patients here are seen within 62-day targets,** compared to 2 in 3 getting that care in regional equivalents.

This is **a direct result of austerity** and lack of resources. As a result, private firms are beginning to fill the vacuum with GPs, hospitals and even ambulances at premium costs. **There has been a complete failure to plan healthcare on an all-island basis, which is now causing service collapse in many hospitals serving vital cross-border functions** due to a lack of specialist staff. Stormont politicians act indignant about outcomes yet are deeply complicit in giving cover to policy.

The reality is that **Inequality is growing across society,** in housing, education, healthcare and access to services.

When the Good Friday Agreement was signed, **it was assumed that a neoliberal economic model would be promoted by all of Stormont's main parties.** Public services would be run down, and privatisation would boost jobs and economic prosperity. In reality, privatisation has led to growing inequality and worsening services.

Stormont's promotion of the Agri-Business "Going for Growth" strategy has created huge profits for Moy Park but has **led directly to the poisoning of Lough Neagh** and our waterways.

Now all of **Stormont's main parties encourage us to embrace AI** and **data centres** as the solution to poverty and struggling public services. The reality is that the 'AI data centre' economy is benefiting billionaires and is destroying jobs, the environment and boosting further privatisation of public services.



People Before Profit will not pretend that better rules in parliament buildings will house a family, abolish waiting lists or raise wages.

Those things are **won by people organising in workplaces and in our communities, and by socialists using every platform we have**, inside and outside Stormont, to argue for a different kind of society altogether.

But, as we have seen, the present set-up **blocks working people in their efforts to bring change.** At the very least, **we need more democracy, not less.**

It is no accident that the Northern state is built on dividing working people. **As a first step on the road to a united Ireland, we propose the following:**
Inside Stormont

1. **One MLA, one vote:** abolish communal designations. **Every member's vote should count the same,** regardless of how they identify.

2. **Scrap the petition of concern.** The 2022 reforms narrowed its use, but they did not remove a minority veto over progressive legislation. It should be abolished outright.

3. **End the single-party veto.** No party should be able to collapse the institutions or block their formation. Where a party refuses to nominate a Minister, the Assembly proceeds without that party.

4. **Elect the Speaker by simple majority,** as in Scotland and Wales. End the requirement that hands the largest parties control over this influential position.

5. **Fair allocation of Assembly time and resources.** Speaking time, Private Members' Bill slots and committee business must be allocated transparently and fairly, rather than stitched up between the two largest parties.

6. **Management of conflicts of interest.** Members with a financial interest in a particular sector - landlords voting on housing legislation, for example - must declare it and recuse themselves. This should be backed up by a publicly accessible and regularly-updated register of interests, as well as a right of recall for constituents.



7. **Funded community assemblies** with budgets and decision-making powers over local services, planning and regeneration.
8. **A direct say for workers in the running of public services, through their trade unions,** at every level from local council wards to Departmental level.
9. **Fiscal powers to tax wealth.** Devolution here has fewer economic levers. We want the power to raise revenue from corporations and the wealthy.
10. **An all-Ireland NHS.** Free at the point of use and publicly delivered on an all-island basis, ending the absurdity of two under-resourced systems on one small island.
11. **Full delivery of language rights,** including a properly resourced Irish language strategy, investment in Irish-medium education and healthcare delivered through Irish.

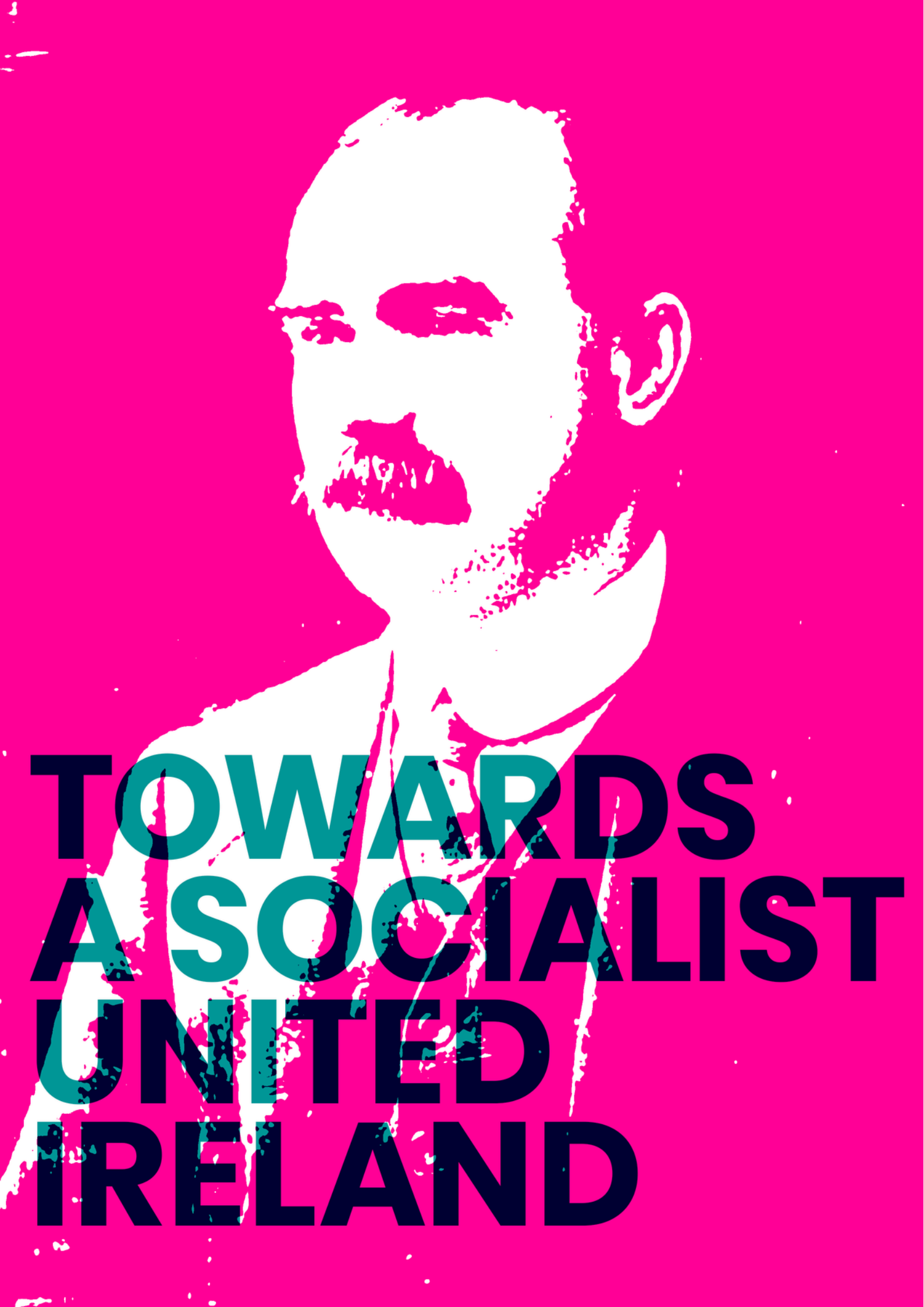
ENDING PARTITION

The partition of Ireland **was a mechanism to permanently divide workers** and **install conservative regimes on both sides of the island.**

It **cannot be ended by just bolting on the six counties to a tax haven** with private hospitals, church-run schools and a housing market run for landlords. This is not an inspiring vision of a united Ireland worth fighting for.

We need to go beyond the **corporate-friendly versions of a united Ireland promoted by Sinn Féin and the SDLP.** We need to break from the economic model promoted by billionaires and powerful corporations that leads to relentless war, genocide, climate destruction and impoverishment.

Unity will not be won **by asking workers to swap the devil they know for the devil they don't.** Only the prospect of **a materially better Ireland** - homes, healthcare, education and secure, well-paid work - **can win that argument.**


TOWARDS
A SOCIALIST
UNITED
IRELAND

People Before Profit **wants a united Ireland that is animated by the vision of James Connolly,** Ireland's great socialist.

Unity must involve radical change, **the redistribution of wealth** to meet the needs of the vast majority and **a vast expansion of democracy** away from elites.
We want an Ireland where:

- **Workers are lifted out of poverty** by high minimum wages.
- **There are wealth taxes** and proper corporation taxes to fund decent public services
- **There is a state construction company** to build cheaper homes, alongside rent controls and a ban on no-fault evictions.
- **A separation of church and state.** Schools are run by local democratic bodies rather than any church.
- **A foreign policy that is anti-colonial and cuts all ties with Israel. No support for** any future wars promoted by Western **imperialism.** Full solidarity with Palestine.
- **A country that proudly defends LBGTQ rights** and promotes gender equality by providing free childcare and abortion rights.
- **A proud anti-racist policy** that welcomes refugees
- **A just transition** away from fossil fuels.

A UNITED IRELAND THROUGH PEOPLE POWER

To get there, the power to trigger a referendum **must be taken out of the hands of the Secretary of State** and placed on **a democratic footing,** with a clear and binding timetable.

The reluctance of both the British and Irish governments to call a border poll **must be countered** by **a people power movement** that forces the issue onto the political agenda.

There should be **a constituent assembly to write a new constitution for the whole island.** In that assembly, we will fight for **the right to housing,** for **healthcare free at the point of use,** for **a secular and free education system** from primary school to **the abolition of college fees,** and for **an article maintaining Ireland's neutrality** and **barring participation in NATO.**

We are for a united Ireland that breaks with the current destructive economic model that prioritises the needs of the wealthy over the needs of ordinary people.

Bígí Linn.